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## News

### Feared UVF gang murdered while protected by police

Sunday, January 21, 2007

By Stephen Breen

The Police Ombudsman's explosive report on the murder of Raymond McCord jnr will tomorrow reveal how a notorious gang of loyalist informers were responsible for more than 15 murders.

And Nuala O'Loan's four-year probe into the activities of the Mount Vernon UVF will outline how the feared unit and its leader - top spy Mark Haddock - were being protected during their 12-year reign of terror.

The report - set to have serious political implications - will be unveiled at a Belfast hotel tomorrow morning and is the biggest probe undertaken by Mrs O'Loan's investigators.

A senior security source last night told how the gang's terrorist crimes had "shocked" the 12 investigators who produced the explosive report.

Said the source: "When the investigators looked at Haddock and how he was handled by police, it led them to a series of terrorist incidents.

"This investigation also looked at a number of people inside the UVF's Mount Vernon unit and their links to the police. There were hundreds of pages of evidence and intelligence.

"They have discovered that Haddock and his colleagues committed a series of terrorist offences while they were being protected by police.

"The only names that will appear in the report which is published tomorrow are those of the deceased. Sir Hugh Orde and Peter Hain are the only people who will have the names of the officers who ran these informers.

"The evidence uncovered is bad and a file has been sent to the Public Prosecution Service.

"Extensive material gained from this investigation will all be put in the public domain."

Sunday Life can also reveal Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde has agreed to implement the report's recommendations on the future handling of police informers.

Mrs O'Loan's investigation focuses on the activities of the north Belfast terror gang between 1991 and 2003.

They reveal how Haddock's henchmen were responsible for a series of terror offences, including murder, attempted murder, drug-dealing, kidnapping and extortion.

Some of the murders highlighted in the findings include Co Tyrone builder Gary Convie and Catholic woman Sharon McKenna.

And we can also reveal Mrs O'Loan will meet with some of the families of the terror gang's victims later today to discuss the document.

Belfast-based solicitor Padraig O'Muirigh, who represents Ms McKenna's brother, Paul, said families had a "legitimate expectation" of prosecutions.

Added Mr O'Muirigh: "We expect the report to confirm that agents of the state were allowed to murder without fear of prosecution and with the full knowledge of their police handlers.

"We believe this report will be explosive and we hope it makes recommendations for prosecutions against Special Branch and senior RUC officers. We hope the Public Prosecution Service makes a decision to prosecute if there is strong evidence which exposes criminal conduct by police officers.

"Paul McKenna is considering calling for an independent public inquiry into this matter and he would like to

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speak to other families about this.

"We have grave concerns about this issue and how it was handled by Sir Hugh and we would again request a meeting with him to voice our concerns."

The report was launched in response to a complaint made by Raymond McCord snr over the police investigation into his son's killing.

Although a number of former and serving officers co-operated with the Police Ombudsman investigators, there was a small group who refused to co-operate.

## I've been vindicated: McCord

Crusading father Raymond McCord snr will tomorrow hear the truth he has been waiting almost 10 years for.

And when Nuala O'Loan publishes her explosive report into the brutal killing of the campaigning dad's son, the north Belfast man knows he will finally be vindicated.

Shortly after the RAF radio operator's killing on November 9, 1997, Mr McCord claimed that the Mount Vernon UVF, which was riddled with informers, was responsible for battering his son to death.

Since then, the dad-of-three has been subjected to a series of death threats, been ignored by senior unionist politicians and branded a liar.

Although Mr McCord welcomes the findings of Mrs O'Loan's report, he has vowed to continue his campaign to face his son's killers in court.

He said: "Everything I have been saying for the last nine years or so has been true and Mrs O'Loan's report confirms this.

"The biggest mistake the UVF ever made was killing my son. They can no longer say I was an aggrieved father or a 'Walter Mitty'-type character."

He added: "Why are the people who killed my son still members of the UVF? I was told by the leadership that there would be no cover-up but they have never produced the results of their so-called 'inquiry'.

"I know the chief-of-staff of the UVF is also a police informer and the reason they didn't do anything about Haddock is because his handler told him not to.

"It was informer replacing informer in the UVF leadership and the other man who covered Haddock's back was his brigadier who was based in Monkstown, but was later stood down and replaced by yet another informer.

"I haven't forgot the people who murdered my son - and I will not be going away."

Mr McCord also said the highest levels of the Government and the police were aware of the crimes being committed by Haddock and his gang.

He added: "If it is proven that senior police officers and senior Government officials were aware of the crimes being committed by Haddock and his men then they should be brought before the courts.

"My family was left isolated after my son's killing and the only person I can thank for standing by me is Lady Sylvia Hermon.

"This wasn't just about the police making mistakes on one or two murders.

"This was the police turning a blind eye to their agents killing innocent people.

"I was never afraid to take on the UVF and people like Mark Haddock.

"I know, effectively, it was the security forces who were controlling the UVF at the highest level."

The murder victim's brother, Gareth, spoke of his family's pain over the last nine years.

"Will someone explain to me why people in the PUP never helped us get justice?

"Why they never called for decommissioning or for the killers of my brother to be expelled from the organisation?

"I would also like to know why it took almost a year for the Police Ombudsman to get files on Haddock?

"There was police intelligence showing who was doing the murders and it was never acted upon. We have known all along we would be vindicated.

"I would also like to know if rank and file UVF members will now come forward if they know their commanders have been involved in collusion."

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